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*NOTES ON EGYPTIAN AFFAIRS.*—No. 2.

# MILITARY CONTROL IN EGYPT:

I. THE ARMY OF OCCUPATION;

II. THE NATIONAL ARMY;

III. PRESENT REQUIREMENTS.

BY

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# NOTES ON EGYPTIAN AFFAIRS.

A PAMPHLET on 'Lord Cromer's Supremacy,' which was published on 25th February, was the first of a short series, under the above general title, in which it is proposed to consider in more detail the need and opportunities for reforms which were briefly indicated in an earlier pamphlet, on 'Egypt under British Control,' of which the first edition appeared last December, and a second in February.

Among the matters that will probably be dealt with in future pamphlets are :—Financial Control, Administration of Justice, Education, Public Works, Municipal Institutions, Political Institutions, and the Capitulations.

Since the following pages were sent to the printers, Lord Cromer's very important Annual Report for 1906 has been circulated. Opportunity will be found for commenting on statements in it, bearing on present questions, which appear open to objection ; also, on the issues of Lord Cromer's unexpected resignation, only announced yesterday.

H. R. F. B.

Broadway Chambers, Westminster,
13th April, 1907.

# MILITARY CONTROL IN EGYPT.

THE military control now established in Egypt was an almost necessary consequence of the action which the British Government deemed itself constrained by the course of events to take, and found itself compelled by events to take single-handed, with a view to the suppression of Arabi Pasha's rising in 1881 and to the removal of abuses that the Khedive Tewfik and his Ministers were unable to deal with satisfactorily. But from the first, and repeatedly, assurances have been given that this control should be as brief as circumstances allowed, and should have for its sole object the setting up in the country of such institutions as would enable its people to manage their own affairs satisfactorily. After nearly a quarter of a century of waiting, the Egyptians have a right to ask how soon, and by what methods, the British Government proposes to make a start in keeping its promises.

The control is, of course, of two sorts. It comprises, in the first place, the actual, or ostensible, occupation of Egypt by British troops; and, in the second, the employment of British officers, lent for the purpose, in superintending the so-called National Army, of which the rank and file is drawn by conscription from the native population.

## I. THE ARMY OF OCCUPATION.

The first was clearly intended to be little more than a preliminary and preparation for the second, to be done away with as soon as its original purposes were served.

**Lord Granville's Intentions.**

"Her Majesty's Government," wrote Earl Granville in his letter of instructions to Lord Dufferin on 3rd November, 1882, "while desiring that the British occupation should last for as short a time as possible, feel bound not to withdraw from the task thus imposed upon them until the administration of affairs has been reconstructed upon a basis which will afford satisfactory guarantees for the maintenance of peace, order, and prosperity in Egypt, and for fulfilment of obligations towards foreign Powers." And on 3rd January, 1883, he informed the Powers concerned that, "although for the present a British force remains in Egypt for the preservation of tranquillity, Her Majesty's Government are desirous of withdrawing it as soon as the state of the country, and the organisation of proper means for the maintenance of the Khedive's authority, will admit of it."—(Parliamentary Paper, 'Egypt, No. 2, 1883,' pp. 11, 34.)

"Reorganisation of the army and police force" was foremost among the reforms that Lord Dufferin was instructed by Earl Granville to aim at securing, and the steps taken in this direction will be presently referred to. As soon as this undertaking, and others dependent upon it, had been successfully launched, the British forces would presumably have been withdrawn had not the Mahdi's movements in the Sudan, and his threatened establishment of a fanatic despotism in Egypt itself, furnished excuse or justification for prolongation of the arrangement. Sir Henry Drummond Wolff, indeed, was sent by the Marquis of Salisbury to Constantinople in August, 1885, at the request of the Porte, to arrange a Convention for the withdrawal under proper conditions, to be agreed upon "in concert with the Khedive"; and a document to this effect was actually signed on 24th October in the same year, though it was of no value, as the Sultan refused to ratify his Foreign Minister's signature. Thereupon, another Convention was prepared, in substantial agreement with a declaration made by Lord Salisbury in a dispatch to Sir H. Drummond Wolff, dated 15th January, 1887, which is notable as, according to Lord Milner, "a landmark in our Egyptian policy." Lord Salisbury wrote:—

**Lord Salisbury's Proposals.**

"The Sultan is pressing the Government of Great Britain to name a date for the evacuation of Egypt, and in that demand he is avowedly encouraged by one, or perhaps two, of the European Powers. Her Majesty's Government have every desire to give him satisfaction upon this point, but they cannot fix even a distant date for evacuation until they are able to make provision for securing beyond that date the external and internal peace of Egypt. The object which the Powers of Europe have had in view, and which it is not less the desire of Her Majesty's Government to attain, may be generally expressed by the phrase, 'the neutralisation of Egypt'; but it must be neutralisation with an exception designed to maintain the security and permanence of the whole arrangement. The British Government must retain the right to guard and uphold the condition of things which will have been brought about by the military action and large sacrifices of this country. So long as the Government of Egypt maintains its position, and no disorders arise to interfere with the administration of justice or the action of the executive power, it is highly desirable that no soldier belonging to any foreign nation should remain on the soil of Egypt, except when it may be necessary to make use of the land-passage from one sea to another. Her Majesty's Government would willingly agree that such a stipulation should, whenever the evacuation had taken place, apply to English as much as to any other troops; but it will be necessary to restrict this provision, as far as

England is concerned, to periods of tranquillity. England, if she spontaneously and willingly evacuates the country, must retain the treaty right of intervention if at any time either internal peace or external security should be seriously threatened."

Those were conditions to which no reasonable Egyptian "Nationalist" could object, at any rate as a prelude to such complete independence as ought surely to be conceded at some future time when the Egyptians have proved their fitness to be trusted with it. They were also agreed to at first by the Sultan, with non-essential modifications: one being a definite stipulation that the British troops should be withdrawn within three years—no Ottoman troops, moreover, being allowed in the country after that limit—unless in the interval disturbances occurred which were grave enough to render withdrawal impracticable; another being substitution of the term "territorial immunity" (in the French text "sureté territoriale") for the "neutralisation" promised to Egypt in due course. A second Convention was accordingly signed on 22nd May, 1887. This, however, in its turn was repudiated by the Porte, and the negotiations then broken off have not since been renewed.

Meanwhile the spread of the Mahdist movement and the injudicious and fitful or contradictory measures adopted for dealing with it, if not also administrative failures or shortcomings in Egypt, had broadened the grounds held valid for continuance, and occasional enlargement, of the Army of Occupation. "The withdrawal of the British troops," wrote the Earl of Rosebery to Lord Cromer on 16th February, 1883, "would too probably result in a speedy return to the former corrupt and defective system of administration, and be followed by relapse into confusion which would necessitate a fresh intervention under still more difficult circumstances." Whatever warrant there may have been for that expectation ten years after the temporary British occupation of Egypt had been entered upon, and six years before the Anglo-Egyptian conquest of the Sudan had been effected, no such plea is, or at any rate ought to be, permissible now. Egypt has had more than two dozen years of British occupation, during which Lord Cromer has been doing so much, and doing much of it so well, towards the carrying out of all, and more than all, the reforms proposed by Lord Granville in 1883, in addition to "reorganisation of the army and police force"—as part of a comprehensive scheme of Egyptian Government, which, it is still professed, is merely designed to qualify the Egyptians for self-rule—that no justification can be found for its continuance.

**Their Abandonment.**

Even Lord Milner had no other excuse to offer for the Army of Occupation than that its "moral effect" enables Great Britain to overawe the Egyptian people and force them into compliance with methods of government which they could never be trusted to continue if left to themselves. He wrote in 1892 :—

**The Present Anomaly.**

"The British troops have, of course, no sort of status in the country. They are not the soldiers of the Khedive, or foreign soldiers invited by the Khedive. They are not the soldiers of the protecting Power, since there is in theory no protecting Power. In theory their presence is an accident, and their character that of simple visitors. At the present moment they are no longer, from the military point of view, of vital importance, for their numbers have been repeatedly reduced, and for several years past they have not exceeded, and do not now exceed, 3,000 men. It is true that their presence relieves a certain portion of the Egyptian army from duties it would otherwise have to perform, and that, if the British troops were altogether reduced, the number of Egyptian soldiers might have to be somewhat increased. But its value as part of the defensive forces of the country does not, of course, constitute the real meaning and importance of the British Army of Occupation. It is as the outward and visible sign of the predominance of British influence, of the special interest taken by Great Britain in the affairs of Egypt, that that army is such an important element in the present situation. Its moral effect is out of all proportion to its actual strength. The presence of a single British regiment lends a weight they would not otherwise possess to the counsels of the British Consul-General. Take the troops away, and you must either run the risk of a decline of British influence, which would imperil the work of reform, or devise, for a time at least, some new and equivalent support for that influence."—('England in Egypt,' p. 29.)

The conquest of the Sudan would doubtless have been, if practicable at all, very much more difficult than it was, had there been no British Army of Occupation to uphold authority in Egypt while its own army was mainly employed in outside work. But since 1899 the British forces in Egypt have been a costly and, to all right-minded natives, an offensive superfluity. Garrisoned at Cairo and Alexandria, their presence there is, of course, as welcome as it would be anywhere else to the section of the community engaged in catering for the necessities and enjoyments of such visitors ; and last year's disastrous pleasure-seeking at the expense of the peasants owning pigeons at Denshawai is signal illustration of the straits to which British officers may be driven in search for relief from their ennui.

**Its Harmfulness and Costliness.**

But no one could have imagined beforehand that this same Denshawai incident would have been so harmful a freak as it turned out to be. It, or the state of feeling engendered by it in Egypt, and the comparatively trivial dispute with the Porte over an Arabian question occurring almost at the same time, were held by Lord Cromer to be so alarming that, as appears in the Egyptian Estimates for 1907, the strength of the Army of Occupation was raised from 2,906, the previous number, to 4,758, and that the small share of the expense thrown on the Egyptian Exchequer—the bulk of the load being borne by the British taxpayers—had to be accordingly increased from £100,000 to £150,000 a year.

This very suggestive paragraph appears in the Budget memorandum of Sir Vincent Corbett, the Financial Adviser for the current year :—

"It would be out of place here to discuss the political aspects of the events which took place last summer, but the net financial result has been directly or indirectly to burden the State in the year now drawing to a close with a considerable increase of military expenditure, and to add to the Budget of 1907 and succeeding years a permanent charge of £E44,000 for the reinforced British Garrison, all of which will naturally have to be supported by the Egyptian taxpayer. It has reduced the balance available for Education and Public Works, and incidentally it has caused most regrettable delay in the work of the Commission charged to prepare recommendations for improving the status of Government employés. Lastly, it has shelved for the present any further attempt at tariff reform."—('Journal Officiel du Gouvernement Égyptien,' 24th Dec., 1906, p. 2491.)

## II. The National Army.

An inevitable result of the overthrow of Arabi Pasha was the disbandment, under a Khedivial Decree dated 20th December, 1882, of so much as remained of the army which he had led in revolt; and the setting up of a new army was, on the whole, wisely planned by Sir Evelyn Wood after less satisfactory attempts had been made by General Valentine Baker.

A born soldier, deterred by unfortunate circumstances from pursuing in his own country the career for which he seemed exceptionally fitted, General Baker had taken service in Egypt in October, 1882, and at once proceeded to devise measures for reorganising its fighting forces. It was at his instigation that officers in the British army were allowed to accept "temporary service under the Khedive without quitting Her Majesty's service"; and his first idea was to stock the rank and file of an establishment comprising a semi-military *gendarmerie*, as well

as a regular army, with recruits drawn from the refuse of Swiss and other European towns.

This project, happily, was forbidden, and, General Baker's functions being limited to those of Inspector-General of Police, Sir Evelyn Wood was appointed Sirdar or Commander-in-Chief, primarily to initiate a system of which the outline had been agreed upon with Lord Dufferin. Very few, if any, will dissent from Lord Milner's statement that

**Sir Evelyn Wood's Scheme.**

"It is greatly to the honour of Lord Dufferin that, amid the wildest suggestions crowding in upon him, suggestions of Turkish battalions, of mixed European battalions, of every possible combination of riff-raff from all quarters of the globe, he adhered firmly to the principle of entrusting the defence of the country to its own inhabitants. Evidently, if the thing was possible, it was incomparably the best plan. The foreign civilians in Egypt were unruly enough; what would foreign janissaries be likely to be? But, sound as the principle was, its execution might have been very different if Lord Dufferin had not been able at that moment to lay his hands upon a man who not only possessed unquestionable military talents and a great experience of war, but was able to rise to the bold conception that even the despised fellah could be turned into a soldier. If it was true that ill-usage had made him a coward, might it not be possible that proper treatment would once more make him a man?"—('England in Egypt,' p. 140.)

Lord Dufferin hoped that quite a small national army would suffice for all the needs of Egypt. He wrote to Earl Granville on 18th November, 1882:—

"On the assumption that Egypt will be secured by diplomatic means from European and Turkish aggression, it has been contended that the province requires no army at all. This is a mistake, for, though an efficient gendarmerie may be able, in ordinary times, to prevent the Bedouins causing any trouble along the desert border and the banks of the Canal, it is essential that these unruly Arab communities should know that the Government hold in reserve a military force capable of checking any serious attempt on their part to disturb the peace of the country; otherwise they would not hesitate to break through the necessarily sparse and feeble frontier guards, in the hope of plundering Cairo. But there are other dangers to be provided against. Egypt has in all times been subject to small local insurrections. These are generally of a religious character, set on foot by half-mad impostors, who have given themselves out as divinely-inspired leaders. Unless a movement of this kind is checked at once, it is sure to spread amongst a credulous population, and therefore the Government should possess the means for its immediate suppression.

"But, although a certain military force is undoubtedly necessary for

Egypt, it is desirable, from every point of view, that it should not exceed by a single man the real requirements of the country. These evidently are very small. The Delta is a triangular area of only a few thousand square miles, traversed in every direction by railways and branches of the Nile. The rest of Egypt consists of a narrow strip of alluvial soil from six to fifteen miles broad, divided through its entire length by a navigable river, and consequently accessible in every part to troops on the shortest notice. I am now referring to Egypt proper, and I leave out of account the military requirements of the Sudan and the Abyssinian frontier."—('Egypt, No. 2, 1883,' p. 16.)

**Later Developments.**

Unfortunately these questions could not be long left out of account, and the necessity, in the circumstances, for a much larger and better-trained army than the one proposed by Lord Dufferin was soon shown by the disaster that befel General Baker's rabble of some 3,500 at El Teb on 5th February, 1884, when, as he reported, on the advance of the enemy, less than 1,000 strong, they "threw down their arms and ran, allowing themselves to be killed without the slightest resistance," more than 2,000 dead and all the implements of war being left on the field. Sir Evelyn Wood's plans for reorganising the army, only in their early stage at the time of General Baker's reverses, were effectively carried out, after his retirement from the Sirdarship in April, 1885, by his successor, Sir Richard Grenfell, and they were further expanded, with considerable modifications, by Lord Kitchener, who followed in 1892. But the troubles in the Sudan, which were consequences as well as causes of the continuous developments, furnished excuse, if not warrant for the growth of the army from the limit of 6,000 fixed by Lord Dufferin in 1882. In 1892 it exceeded 12,000. In 1899 it numbered at least 25,000. That was the last year of the Sudan war, and since then, under the present Sirdar, Sir Reginald Wingate, the numbers have been reduced, being now about 16,000.

**Present Conditions.**

The close of the Sudan war, besides enabling the authorities to at once reduce the army by about 5,500 officers and men, opened the way for various "reforms," some of them really useful. Previously the term of compulsory military service to which every able-bodied Egyptian, between the ages of nineteen and twenty-seven, was liable was fifteen years—six in the regular army, five in the police or other Government Departments, and four in the reserve. In 1900 the term of service for the nine Egyptian battalions (apart from the six recruited in the Sudan, whose enlistment is practically for life, or until they become too old for work)

was reduced to ten years—five in the army or marine, and five either in the reserve or in the police or coastguard. About 70,000 are, on an average, available for conscription each year, besides some 40,000 who are exempted on the ground that they are either in Government employment or engaged in religious occupations, or else that they are sons of military officers, have other family reasons, or are physically unfit. Any one, moreover, who can afford to buy exemption from the ballot by a payment of £20 may do so; consequently, as the service is generally distasteful to all but the poorest and worst-mannered or least energetic members of the community, the army is largely composed of the dregs of society, and has to be severely disciplined for the tasks it has to perform. These are still mainly in the Sudan, in which most of the Egyptian conscripts are stationed. Of the seven first-class districts over which, along with three second-class districts, the whole force is distributed, the only one in Egypt is Cairo, with Alexandria for a summer station; nearly all the rest of the troops are employed in garrisoning or patrolling the Sudan, although for this the Sudan Treasury is charged only £E126,757 out of the £E678,625 estimated for 1907.

**Defence of the Sudan.**

The Egyptian people are, in fact, made to pay as much as four-fifths of the cost of an army of which about six-sevenths are employed in the Sudan (nominally the joint property of Egypt and Great Britain, but really a British possession), and this in addition to a charge of £E253,006 for the upkeep of civil establishments in the Sudan. We are, it is true, invited by the military authorities to assume that, if the Egyptian Sirdar were not also Governor-General of the Sudan, quite as large and expensive an army as he now commands would be required for protection of the frontiers of Egypt alone. But this is an assumption that needs to be proved; and, though there may be good reason for the ever-growing outlay incurred in strengthening the whole fighting machinery and ostensibly improving the lot of its human components, the taxpayers in the Delta are to be excused for grumbling at the additional burdens thrown upon them, even when apologised for in words as cogent as the following from Sir Vincent Corbett's statement with reference to the Budget for 1907:—

"It was found necessary to increase the pay of the junior officers and employés of the Army, on account of the rise in the cost of living and the expenses to which they were put.....It has also been deemed prudent to provide a larger number of officers for the unhealthy districts in the south of

the Sudan. It is most important that officers serving in these districts should be given an adequate amount of leave of absence every year if they are to maintain their health. The great extent of the country to be held, and the occasional necessity for the employment of military forces, have shown that an increase in the number of troops is advisable. It is therefore proposed to raise the first half of the new Sudanese Battalion and to increase considerably the Arab Battalion. It has also been found better to replace a certain amount of the Cavalry by Camel Corps, which are more adapted to the present needs of the Army, though they are more expensive to maintain. .....These large items, together with a variety of smaller ones—and, for the most part, consequential increases in the Medical, Clothing and Equipment Chapters—have raised the total increase to £E72,388."—('Journal Officiel,' 24th Dec., 1906, p. 2511.)

**Compulsory Military Service.**

The fact that so many of the Egyptians now "recruited" for ten years' compulsory service in the army, police, or reserves are taken away from their own country for employment in the Sudan naturally adds much to their dislike of what is really a form of slavery, retaining many of the abuses of the old Turkish misrule. In his Annual Report for 1902 Lord Cromer wrote:—

"Under the system existing long prior to the British occupation, the sheikh of the village was held personally responsible for the appearance of any man called up for enlistment. If the recruit did not appear at the proper time, the sheikh was given a month in which to find him. At the end of that time he had to produce either the man himself or three others from the village to replace him. Failing the adoption of either of these courses, the sheikh was punished—he can scarcely, without a misuse of terms, be said to have been tried—by court-martial. In 1885 a recruiting law was passed, in which the principle of fixing the responsibility on the sheikh remained intact. By a decree issued in 1887 the responsibility for deserters was shifted to the head of the family to which the deserter belonged. Every head of a family, a member of which was serving in the army, was created the statutory guarantor of the conscript, and, in the event of the latter deserting, was given three months in which to find him. At the end of this time, if the deserter were still missing, his nearest relative suitable for service was taken in his place. Failing any suitable relative, the head of the family was fined £E100. This proceedure was also adopted in the case of absentees, when recruits were called up for enlistment.....Petitions which were from time to time received at the British Agency furnished convincing proof that the law was as objectionable in practice as it certainly was in theory. Several cases were brought to my notice in which, had the law been allowed to take its course, some father of a family, possessing an acre or two of land, would

have been sold up and ruined because he was unable to account for the absence of his son.....The law was manifestly defective and required to be changed."

Lord Cromer very properly brought about a reform, which, however, is not enough, though he can claim that now "the system of vicarious punishment has been completely abolished." He proceeds:—

"Under the new law a recruit who absents himself without excuse, when called up for medical examination with a view to enlistment, is liable to be immediately embodied, without regard to his place on the list, and to be retained with the colours for six, instead of for the usual period of five, years. In the event of his being found medically unfit for service, or of his evading enlistment until he is past the age of service, he is liable, up to the age of forty-three, to imprisonment for three years, together with a fine not exceeding £E20. Every person (other than his wife) who knowingly conceals or shelters him, or otherwise aids him with intent that he may escape from enlistment, is liable to the same penalty."—('Egypt, No. 1, 1903,' pp. 37, 38.)

Except that imprisonment in addition to fining seems to be seldom if ever resorted to, and that the payment of £E20 as "badalia," or the fee for exemption from the ballotage, has come to be a recognised institution, the recruiting law remains in operation, and Lord Cromer, while admitting that the law "requires revision," thus, in his report for 1905, excuses himself for not revising it:—

**"Badalia."**

"I have seen frequent criticisms in the local European press upon the system now in force in respect to payment for exemption from military service. That that system should be condemned by Europeans generally is very natural. I have on a previous occasion stated that the system appears to me to be a bad one. It has also been condemned by Sir Vincent Corbett. It would not be difficult to devise some plan which, at all events in European eyes, would be more equitable and less objectionable. Before making any radical change, however, it is desirable to ascertain, so far as is possible, what the Egyptians themselves think on the subject. I have been at much pains to obtain information on this point. I have conversed, not merely with officials, members of the Legislative Council, and others in a high social position, but also with village sheiks and with a number of fellaheen whom I have met in the course of travelling about the country, and who were often quite ignorant of my personality. I have no doubt that what the Egyptians would most prefer is that they should neither pay exemption money nor be liable to military service. This is obviously impossible. But, as between the alternative plans of rendering every one liable to service and giving a fair chance to all, and enabling exemption to be purchased on payment of money, there is,

so far as I have been able to ascertain, no difference of opinion. All prefer the present system. Under these circumstances, it would appear more than doubtful whether it is desirable to sacrifice a considerable amount of revenue in order to carry into execution a reform which, however theoretically justifiable, would, I feel convinced, be the very reverse of popular amongst those in whose special interests it would be undertaken."—('Egypt, No. 1, 1906,' p. 68.)

Lord Cromer's statement that, in the opinion of all Egyptians whom he has found it convenient to consult, it is better that those who can afford to buy exemption from military service should be allowed to do so than that they should be liable to conscription like their poorer neighbours is not, of course, open to contradiction. But, seeing that he shares the objections of some of the most capable of his English colleagues, as well as of many others, as to the essential unfairness and unwisdom of this crude form of favouritism, it is strange that he should continue to tolerate it. He has not shrunk from enforcing other "reforms" which, "however theoretically justifiable," have been and are "the very reverse of popular" among the Egyptians, and his only intelligible excuse for practical as well as theoretical injustice in this matter is that it furnishes an acceptable contribution to the revenue —amounting in 1905 to £E127,140 from 6,357 payers of "badalia."* This contribution is about equal to the sum extracted from the Egyptians in aid of the Army of Occupation imposed upon them.

The result of the system which Lord Cromer admits to be "a bad one" is that, as a rule, only the refuse of the Egyptian people—the ne'er-do-weels and the outcasts, without resources of their own and without friends to come to their rescue—are conscripted for five years slavery in the ranks, which would be intolerable to them if it were not relieved by alternate bouts of pernicious idleness and yet more pernicious savagery, and, after that, they had not larger opportunities of troubling the rest of the community as turbulent policemen, or as unwilling drudges in other subordinate branches of the public service.

Conscription, and the abuses incident to it, press most hardly on the poorer classes in Egypt, those whom Lord Cromer contemptuously assumes to be so unpatriotic as to "prefer that they should neither pay exemption money nor be liable to military service." The middle and upper classes have a grievance of another sort.

* The Budget statement already cited shows a "rachat du service militaire" of £E165,708, out of the total receipts, amounting to £E14,813,346 in 1905, or less than one-ninetieth of the whole.

**The Officering of the Army.**

When the National Army began to be reconstituted in 1883, and practically throughout the past four-and-twenty years, no objections were raised to the main responsibility for its administration being assigned to competent English officers, from the Sirdar downwards. The few difficulties that occasionally arose, especially the two most memorable instances when successive Khedives attempted to control the British policy regarding the Sudan which had been entrusted to the Sirdars nominally appointed by them, help to show that there was need for the arrangements initiated by Lord Dufferin and Sir Evelyn Wood, if there was to be any British guidance at all of Egyptian affairs. This was earnestly desired by the Egyptian statesmen who sought British protection, and was clearly justified by Lord Dufferin when he declared that "Egypt has had enough of Mamelukes and their congeners," and insisted upon the importance of training up an Egyptian Army which should be essentially Egyptian. But he added, in his dispatch of 18th November, 1882:—

"Though from a political standpoint this is the only principle by which we should be guided, there is an obvious necessity from a professional point of view that the initial organisation of the future force should be assisted by experienced and trustworthy officers. The officering of the native army has always been its weakest point. The fellah subaltern, captain or colonel, has seldom been able to acquire that authority and prestige which are so necessary for the maintenance of discipline during peace, and for effective leading in the presence of the enemy. Indeed, unless we have some remedy for this defect, the Egyptian Government will be tempted to seek the aid of Turks, Circassians and Albanians. There is no doubt that these three latter nationalities possess the military instinct to a much higher degree than the native Egyptian. It was with troops drawn from these sources, and not with Egyptians, that Mohammed Ali and Ibrahim Pasha won their victories, and we must not blame the Khedive if he should be over anxious to create something like a backbone to his otherwise invertebrate army out of these strenuous materials, on whose personal fidelity to himself and to their standards he thinks he will be able to rely."

It was to supply such a backbone, but of better material than the Khedive Tewfik favoured, though in accord with the shrewder desires of Tewfik's leading Ministers, that Lord Dufferin, in the same dispatch, recommended "dividing the future army into two sections: one to be officered in the higher grades by Englishmen, and the other in all grades by Egyptians." He added:—

"The merit of this arrangement consists in its offering prospects of

promotion into the highest ranks to native officers. Every one would be agreed that to place English officers under such Egyptian commanders as now exist would be impossible, while to adopt the Indian system throughout the entire army would be at once to cut off every native from the hope of rising in his profession, which is the very last result we should desire. The whole army would, of course, have to be placed at the outset under the command of an English general officer of high professional rank and standing. In the selection of officers to be appointed, I need not insist on the necessity of only such persons being employed as possess the highest qualifications. It would be most unfair to fob off on the Egyptian Government our military failures. Above all, the officers sent out should be young, active, and energetic, and prepared to learn the language".—('Egypt, No. 2, 1883,' pp. 17, 18.)

Except, perhaps, as regards familiarity with Arabic and vernacular Egyptian, Lord Dufferin's requirements as to the qualifications of the British officers commissioned to build up a suitable Egyptian army under Sir Evelyn Wood appear to have been adequately complied with, and, from first to last, Egypt seems to have been exceptionally fortunate as regards the selection of occupants for the more responsible posts. It has been a training-ground for soldiership of the highest class, as valuable to Englishmen as Senegal or Algieria has been to Frenchmen. Whether Egypt has been proportionately benefited thereby is another question. But it has certainly not been benefited by the appointment, in recent times, of so many more British officers than Lord Dufferin contemplated to posts in the National Army.

Of the eight battalions deemed sufficient in the early days of the British occupation for the defence of Egypt, the first half, perhaps rightly, were almost exclusively controlled by British officers; the other half were officered entirely by Egyptians. All these battalions were recruited from the Egyptian fellaheen, and only one fellaheen battalion, the 16th, has since been added to the National Army. The seven intermediate battalions, which have been formed at intervals, are wholly composed of Sudanese troops, whom it may be proper to place entirely under European command, as Egyptian officers could scarcely be expected to maintain sufficient discipline over these still savage warriors. As, however, the Egyptians have to defray the bulk of the expenses of the fighting and other machinery in the Sudan, and derive no practical advantage whatever from its upkeep, they have good grounds for complaining that so small a share of the honour or dignity appertaining thereto should accrue to them. The slur as well as the injury thus thrown on the section of Egyptian society from which

officers would naturally be drawn if nearly all the higher posts in the army were not filled by strangers from England—many of them going to Egypt mainly to acquire experience in tropical soldiership for use elsewhere—is a scandal, and what is more, a grave danger, which was manifest fifteen years ago to even so staunch an admirer of British policy as Lord Milner, and which has grown considerably since then. Lord Milner wrote in 1892 :—

**Lord Milner's Sound Advice.**

"In making soldiers we have had a splendid success. To crown the work, we ought to end by making officers. Nor can there be the smallest doubt that the British heads of the army recognise this duty and do their best to accomplish it. But it is another question whether they are quite bold enough in making the necessary experiments. If the native officers are still wanting in initiative and self-reliance, there seems nothing for it but to multiply opportunities of practising these qualities. To do so would probably lead to some failures, and there certainly was a time when affairs were so critical that nothing whatever could be risked. But that is not quite the case to-day. The present, if any, is the moment for trying gradually to increase the number of native officers in responsible positions. When the army was first formed there were twenty-seven British officers to 6,000 men. To-day there are seventy-six officers to 12,500 men, and there are about forty non-commissioned officers besides. The proportion, instead of diminishing, has increased. The heavy duties, suddenly thrown on the young army at a most critical moment, explain and justify that increase ; but it certainly would seem that, in the interests of both British and Egyptians, it is not desirable to go much further in this direction.

"I have referred already to the existence of a certain covert discontent among the native officers, on account of the slowness of promotion in the higher grades. And this is perfectly natural. The commanders of companies to-day include a great number of young men who have come into the army since 1882, having passed through the Military School. The whole period of their service has been under the English system. We have given them a thorough training, and, though we may know that many of them suffer from some want of character which unfits them for further advancement, it cannot be supposed that they can see with equanimity a number of young English subalterns passed over their heads to occupy at once the position of majors. Without taking at all an alarmist view of such grumbling—for, after all, what army in the world is not full of complaints about the slowness of promotion ?—it is evidently desirable to remove any reasonable grounds for it which may exist. From every point of view it would be a wise policy to increase as soon as possible the number of native officers advanced to the higher posts, always provided that British control at headquarters remains strong

enough to ensure promotions being made rigidly by merit, as without the control they certainly would not be.

"There is another reason, of more importance, perhaps, than the fear of native discontent, which should weigh against the multiplication of British officers in the army. Here, as elsewhere in the Egyptian service, what is essential to the success of British influence is, not the quantity of Englishmen, but their quality. There is no point in the whole wide sphere of our power where it is more important to select most carefully the Englishmen you employ. And of course, if you are going in for picked men, you handicap yourself by demanding large numbers. The Egyptian army has in the course of years necessarily lost many of those Englishmen who were in it from the beginning, who had taken a part in the work of its creation, and who had gained an invaluable experience of the country and the people. Fortunately, there are some of that class remaining.....But there are also a number of young and as yet inexperienced men, and, what is perhaps more serious, there is some danger of a considerable substitution of new for old officers at an early date.....Nothing is more to be deprecated than a too frequent change of the British officers in the army.....Egypt is a very peculiar country, which it takes some time to know. Arabic is a very difficult language, which—even with a serious effort, not always, I fear, made by Englishmen—it takes several years to learn. Yet a knowledge of the peculiarities of the country and people, and a good command of the colloquial language, are most important elements in the utility of Englishmen, and above all of English officers, in Egypt."—('England in Egypt,' pp. 168-170.)

The number of British officers attached to the Egyptian army, stated by Lord Milner, in 1892, to be 76 for an army of about 12,500, had risen in 1906, according to the current Army List, to 182 for an army of about 16,000, in addition to others on the Headquarters Staff, or employed as Governors of Sudan provinces, of whom 58 are named, but a few of whom are also included among the regimental officers. In all other respects the dangers and scandals of the situation have increased during the past fifteen years, in at least equal proportion.

## III. Present Requirements.

**"The Neutralisation of Egypt."**

There are no valid reasons against our now reverting to and promptly carrying out the Egyptian policy that the late Marquis of Salisbury favoured more than twenty years ago; and there are reasons that ought to be overwhelming for our so doing. In a dispatch of 15th January, 1887, already quoted from, Lord Salisbury wrote:—

"The objects which the Powers have had in view, and which it is not less the desire of Her Majesty's Government to attain, may be generally

expressed by the phrase 'the neutralisation of Egypt'; but it must be a neutralisation with the exception designed to maintain the security and permanence of the whole arrangement. The British Government must retain the right to guard and uphold the condition of things which will have been brought about by the military action and large sacrifices of this country. .....England, if she spontaneously and willingly evacuates the country, must retain the treaty right of intervention if at any time either internal peace or external security should be seriously threatened."

That arrangement, in spite of far greater obstacles than exist at present, would have been brought about by Sir Henry Drummond Wolff's abortive treaty with the Porte in 1887 had not that treaty been wrecked by the stubbornness of the Sultan; and it is scarcely conceivable that obstruction from the Yildiz Kiosk would be again tolerated, still less that any other international difficulties would arise, if the British Government were to-day to renew—with such modifications as the experience of twenty years has shown to be expedient—the scheme which Lord Salisbury desired to put in operation in 1887.

It should be much easier now than it was at that time to act without the Porte's concurrence in the event of its refusal to come to terms. Ever since Great Britain took charge of Egyptian finances, the Egyptian Exchequer has been burdened with a charge of £E665,000 per annum in payment of the absolutely "unearned increment," and wholly undeserved gratuity, known as Tribute to the Sultan. A vested interest may have been acquired which would excuse, or even call for in equity, some compensation for abandonment of this preposterous tax on the resources of Egypt—say a lump sum down, or an annuity for twenty years or so. But, if the Porte refused to accept this generous concession, the Egyptian Government would be fully justified, under English guidance, in stopping payment of the tribute; and, the Anglo-French Convention of 1904 having been sanctioned by other Powers, there would be no risk, if the Porte resisted, of its obtaining such European backing as would be necessary to render its resistance of any avail. It would be to the manifest benefit of all Europe, even if tampering with the Turkish tribute caused discomfort to interested bondholders, that the long-promised neutralisation of Egypt should be an accomplished fact.

Without waiting for this most desirable consummation, however, surely the way is clear, and ought to be promptly travelled, for reducing British military control in Egypt to the narrow limits contemplated by Lord Granville and Lord Dufferin, and endorsed by Lord Salisbury and Sir Henry Drummond Wolff. All, and more than all the original

purposes of the Army of Occupation have long since been achieved, and, along with its prompt withdrawal, there should be such reorganisation of the National Army as would keep British direction of it within proper bounds.

**The Sudan Incubus.**

The fiction of an Anglo-Egyptian *condominium* over the Eastern Sudan may possibly be excusable if it really lightens any prejudices or jealousies with which other European Powers still regard this further extension of British authority in Africa; and yet more, perhaps, if it humours the political vanity of Egyptians by enabling them to suppose that they are partners in the ownership of territory once nominally theirs and recently won back from Mahdist oppression by British generalship, but with far greater outlay of life and treasure on their part than on the part of their British leaders. The Egyptians have, surely, by this time, however, made surrenders and sacrifices enough to exempt them from further taxation, at any rate on the scale hitherto and at present in force, either for the satisfaction of their national vanity or for the advantage of partners now enjoying the lion's share of the spoil. The contributions from the Egyptian Exchequer to the Sudan Treasury in 1899, the first year of separate account-keeping, amounted to £E415,000 for civil and military charges; and the Estimates for 1907 show that in seven years the total had only been reduced to £E379,763. The indirect charges, moreover, especially in the maintenance of an army more than thrice as large as the Egyptians require for their own use, add enormously to the burden; and meanwhile Sir Reginald Wingate's enterprise—admirable in itself—in developing Port Sudan, formerly known as Suakin, as the main outlet and inlet for the growing trade of the region administered by him, cannot fail to be detrimental to the older route through Alexandria, and to deprive Egypt of most of the commercial profit that would otherwise have accrued to it from the conquest of the Sudan. The financial as well as the military relations between Egypt and the Sudan need thorough overhauling, and this not solely on military grounds.* Had it not been

* Though military, not financial, control of Egypt is being discussed in this chapter, the following significant passage in Lord Cromer's report for 1899 may here be appropriately quoted :—"As it is probable that, for some time to come, the Sudan will constitute a charge on the Egyptian Treasury, it is manifest that some degree of control must be exercised by the Egyptian Financial Department over the conduct of Sudanese finance. The main object which it has been sought to attain is to institute a system calculated to afford an adequate guarantee to the Financial Department against the creation of a state of affairs which might cause serious embarrassment to the Egyptian Treasury, whilst it would, at the same time, adm

for the Sudan war, and had all the Egyptian revenue—augmented as it was by the helpful policy of the British Government in other respects—been applied to strictly Egyptian expenditure, nearly the whole of its National Debt might, perhaps, have been paid off by now.

**A Reformed National Army.**

If Egypt were a British colony, or even a recognised British protectorate, there might be technical warrant for throwing upon the Egyptian population a burden of at least £1,000,000 a year, in direct and indirect charges, on account of the Sudan as part and parcel with it of the whole British Empire. Egypt not being a British colony or a British protectorate, however, but a nominal province and long-suffering tributary of the Porte, merely placed under the temporary guardianship of Great Britain, in order that its inhabitants may be enabled and assisted to manage their own affairs without either troubling or being troubled by the Porte, Great Britain, or any other foreign state, there seems to be no justification whatever for this burden of about £1,000,000 a year, adding at least a fourteenth to the entire outlay, being thrown on the Egyptian taxpayers. The time has surely come, if not for a complete separation of the military establishment of the Sudan from that of Egypt, at any rate for charging upon the Sudan all the expenses incurred on its behalf and for preventing the so-called National Army of Egypt from being, as it practically is at present, little more than an agency for overawing the Sudanese, mainly at the cost of the Egyptian taxpayers.

Only military experts and other competent men on the spot can say how many native troops would be required for the defence of Egypt itself, including, of course, such safeguarding of its land frontiers as is really called for. But it is safe to assume that the 6,000 proposed by Lord Dufferin and Sir Evelyn Wood in 1882 would far more than suffice for the purpose. The Bedouin tribes, who were the chief source of danger a quarter of a century ago, have now been so dispersed or quieted down that there is scarcely more, or perhaps even less, to be feared from them than from the Sudanese, among whom, we are assured, Sir Reginald Wingate has already established firm control. In any case,

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of such a degree of latitude being left to the Governor-General of the Sudan as to obviate any risk that the financial control exercised from Cairo should involve unnecessary interference in matters of local detail."—('Egypt, No. 1, 1900,' p. 44.) It is evident that the Governor-General of the Sudan, who is also Commander-in-Chief of the Egyptian Army, has "latitude" enabling him to draw from Egypt and spend in the Sudan almost any money he thinks necessary, provided the transaction causes no "serious embarrassment to the Egyptian Treasury"—which is quite a different thing from inconvenience or injustice to the Egyptian people.

the Sudan having become, to all intents and purposes, a British protectorate, acquired and administered solely for the supposed advantage of Great Britain, the responsibility of upholding and developing this protectorate and any benefits accruing therefrom clearly devolves on it and its "protectors," and not on the Egyptians. As a matter of fact, under the conditions which the British Government has done most towards bringing about, and may be expected to insist on maintaining in any circumstances, Egypt has almost ceased to have need for any army at all. What it requires is a good police force, much better than the one now forced upon it and principally manned by the ill-disciplined and dissatisfied conscripts who, after five years' service in the army, are employed as reserves, for another five years, on police and other semi-civil duties. For the rest, cut off from contact with dangerous neighbours by the Sudan on the south and by sea or desert on all other sides, except as regards the narrow strips of frontier between it and Arabia on the east, and Tripoli on the west—against possible assailants from either of which, as well as against risks of invasion by sea, it would inevitably have to rely, and would certainly not rely in vain, on Great Britain for protection—what occasion or opportunity can arise in Egypt for other soldiership than the inhabitants may deem necessary in order to protect themselves from their protectors?

Besides the enormous saving of money that would result if the Egyptian army were reduced to say, one-third of its present dimensions, the reduction ought to render it easy to abolish the obnoxious system of conscription which Lord Cromer, while objecting to it, considers indispensable under existing arrangements. A well-paid, well-treated, and well-trained force—a constabulary or, adopting General Baker's term, but not his methods, a *gendarmerie*—should not lack willing and suitable recruits, ready and fit, with satisfaction to themselves and gain to their country, to garrison Egypt and to take the lead in policing it; perhaps also to furnish volunteers for service in the Sudan, borrowed and paid for by the Sudan authorities, not sent there as exiles for a term of years by the rulers of Egypt. There would be advantage in the organisation of such a reformed National Army being assigned to British experts, and that course might even be necessary; but, as a permanency, and with the exception perhaps of a very few superior posts, there would be no place in it for Europeans.

As has already been urged, moreover, the British Army of Occupation has long since served all the useful purpose possible to it. If the

"new political institutions" that Lord Dufferin thought had been "created" by the Organic Law promulgated at his instigation in May, 1883, have not yet been allowed to take shape, the blame lies with the "benevolent despotism" asserted by the British Agent and Consul-General, and symbolised by the British Army of Occupation. Earl Granville in November, 1882, while promising that "the British occupation should last for as short a time as possible," stipulated that it should continue "until the administration of affairs has been reconstructed on a basis which will afford satisfactory guarantees for the maintenance of peace, order, and prosperity in Egypt, and for fulfilment of obligations towards foreign Powers." Much remains to be done before it can be claimed that the administration of affairs in Egypt is in a healthy condition. But all the guarantees that the British occupation is competent to afford either for internal peace, order, and prosperity, or for fulfilment of foreign obligations, have been secured; and whatever remains to be achieved will have a far better chance of accomplishment if the Army of Occupation is withdrawn than if it remains. This Army of Occupation contributes in no way whatever to the wellbeing of the country. On the other hand, rightly or wrongly regarded as a symbol of conquest or annexation, it is nothing but an annoyance to all right-minded Egyptians, and is too often an incentive to disorderly conduct among the less law-abiding members of the community. Nothing but good could follow its withdrawal.

**The Army of Occupation.**

It is not here suggested, of course, that any steps should be taken by the British Government in the way of abandoning Egypt. Our obligations to the Egyptians and to other European nations, incurred when we took charge of the country in 1881, as well as regard for our own interests, which have been considerably added to in the interval, forbid any such action. But we should be shirking none of our duties, we should forfeit none of our rights—on the contrary, we should advance both causes—if, limiting our interference with Egyptian affairs to judicious advice and temperate warnings whenever these appeared to be really necessary, it left the Egyptians, as freely as we leave our own self-governing colonies, to work out their own salvation; merely holding ourselves in readiness—turning to account our positions of vantage in the Mediterranean and the Red Seas—to go to the rescue if they were in serious peril either from lawless outbreaks among themselves or from foreign foes. The "neutralisation of Egypt" is an object that should be more zealously aimed at by His Majesty's Government to-day than it was when Lord Salisbury proposed it in 1887.

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